

Growing Old in the City: Challenges of Access to and Control of Urban Houses among Older Women in Low-income Suburbs of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study addresses the struggles for housing among older women, including the meaning attached to ownership and control of urban houses among low-income households. It analyses the extent to which older women in low-income suburbs of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, can age-in-place. I explain how the ideal of ageing in place for the nineteen women in this research (ages 60 – 90) is dependent on factors such as access to and control of one's housing situation, which are impacted by whether or not they have good sibling and intergenerational family relationships. Family conflicts and unpleasant interactions with siblings, adult children, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren affect their chances of ageing well in their place of choice forcing some of them to begrudgingly retrace their steps back to the rural areas. These older women are poor and do not have reliable sources of income to look after themselves and the children under their care.

Keywords: Family conflicts; Older women; Urban housing; Rural areas; Vulnerability